

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T PARIS 20972
EXDIS
E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MASS, SO, ET, FR
SUBJ: HORN OF AFRICA DEVELOPMENTS

REF: STATE 147850

1. ON JUNE 29 WE DISCUSSED LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HORN AREA WITH QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR CENTRAL AND EAST AFRICA, MARIE-CLAUDE CABANA, AND LEFT BEHIND PAPER BASED ON TALKING POINTS REFTEL. CABANA (WHO HAD PUT OFF A MEETING ON THIS SUBJECT BECAUSE OF PREOCCUPATION WITH ZAIRE DEVELOPMENTS AND THE POST-PONEMENT OF THE SIAD BARRE VISIT TO FRANCE) WAS PLEASED TO HAVE AN UPDATE ON US HORN POLICY WHICH SHE SAID WOULD BE USED IN PREPARING FOR GISCARD'S MEETING WITH SIAD BARRE NOW RESCHEDULED FOR JULY 11. (SIAD BARRE WILL SPEND ONE ADDITIONAL DAY IN FRANCE, EITHER THE TENTH OR TWELFTH. (ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE VISIT IS BEING HELD OFF FOR SECURITY REASONS.)

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2. RESPONDING TO A QUESTION ABOUT FRENCH INTENTIONS AS REGARDS ARMS DELIVERIES TO SOMALIA, CABANA SAID THAT THE FRENCH POSITION IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE US: ANY ARMS PROVIDED WOULD BE OF A DEFENSIVE NATURE (SHE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED AIR DEFENSE WEAPONS) AND WOULD BE PROVIDED ONLY WHEN FRANCE IS ASSURED THAT

SOMALIA IS PREPARED TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. DURING SIAD'S VISIT THE GOF INTENDS TO STRESS THE NEED TO KEEP THE DJIBOUTI-ADDIS RAILROAD FREE FROM ATTACK. AT THE SAME TIME, THE GOF IS VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO HANDLE SOMALIA CAREFULLY. THERE ARE CONSTRAINTS ON WHAT THE WEST CAN DO IN TERMS OF ARMS, BUT IF SOMALIA IS NOT GIVEN SOME DEGREE OF ASSURANCE IN THIS AREA, THE FRENCH FEEL THAT SOMALIA COULD IN DESPERATION TURN BACK TO THE SOVIETS. THERE ARE MANY PERSONS STILL IN HIGH POSITIONS WHO WERE PERFECTLY COMFORTABLE WORKING WITH THE SOVIETS BEFORE AND WHO MIGHT BE AGAIN. IF SOMALIA WERE TO PATCH UP RELATIONS WITH THE USSR, THE WEST WOULD BE CONFRONTED WITH A DANGEROUS SITUATION OF SOVIET CONTROL OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE RED SEA--PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE SOVIET'S ENHANCED POSITION IN THE PDRY.

3. TURNING TO MORE GENERAL GOF HORN POLICY CABANA SAID THAT PRESERVATION OF DJIBOUTI INDEPENDENCE REMAINS THE PRIMARY CONSIDERATION BOTH BECAUSE OF THE FRENCH OBLIGATION THERE AND THE COUNTRY'S INTRINSIC STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE WHICH HAS BEEN UNDERLINED BY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE YEMENS. FRENCH CONCERN OVER DJIBOUTI'S INDEPENDENCE HAS OBLIGED FRANCE TO FOLLOW A POLICY OF EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA. FRENCH CARE IN PRESERVING ITS RELATIONS
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WITH THE ADDIS REGIME SEEMS TO BE PAYING OFF IN TERMS OF REDUCED ETHIOPIAN PRESSURE ON DJIBOUTI BUT MAY ALSO HAVE SOME BROADER BENEFIT FOR THE WEST IN THAT IT PRESERVES SOME SLIGHT WESTERN OPTION FOR ETHIOPIA. FRENCH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE EPMG ARE QUITE NORMAL. CULTURAL AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS CONTINUE AND THE GOF IS PRESSING THE EPMG TO PERMIT THE RETURN OF THE FRENCH CONSUL TO DIRE DAWA. (THE CONSULATE WAS NEVER CLOSED, BUT THE CONSUL WAS ASKED TO LEAVE FOR "SECURITY REASONS" ABOUT THE TIME OF THE CUBAN BUILDUP IN THE OGADEN.) A HIGH-LEVEL ETHIOPIAN DELEGATION WILL VISIT FRANCE AFTER SIAD BARRE'S DEPARTURE. THE FRENCH SUGGESTED A VISIT AS PART OF THEIR BALANCING ACT, BUT IT WAS EAGERLY TAKEN UP BY THE EPMG. THE COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION HAS NOT BEEN DECIDED BUT THE FRENCH UNDERSTAND ARRANGEMENTS ARE BEING HANDLED PERSONALLY BY MENGISTU.

4. IN CONCLUDING MEETING CABANA SAID THAT FREQUENT EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON THIS AREA OF FAST MOVING DEVELOPMENTS IS HIGHLY DESIRABLE.
HARTMAN

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTION ADDED PER S/S-O, CEURVORST.

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